

# FARM FRIDAY FUN

## WITH ARIZONA AGRICULTURE

### TWISTED INFUSION

At the Twisted Infusion Farm, things are a little, well....Twisted! Heather Szymura, the owner and founder of Twisted Infusions, got her start commercially farming in 2016 with a “freight farm,” a 40 ft. refurbished meat shipping container used to grow climate-controlled produce through a vertical hydroponic tower system. Through this unconventional farm they were able to grow almost equivalent to an acre and a half of produce on 5-10 gallons of water a WEEK. That produce was used by chefs across the valley (Phoenix, Arizona).

Although the indoor grow closed in January 2020, another opportunity arose for Heather. About a year ago, she was asked to manage a quarter acre lot of raised garden beds and grow produce for the DC Ranch County Club which she manages still today.

We had the opportunity to talk with Heather and here is what she had to say.



#### 1. Why did you start growing baby greens?

I found that most fine dining chefs like quality, small food and garnishes and with the set up I had it was easy to grow!



**2. Do you prefer growing hydroponically or in the soil?**

Hands down, for the best quality produce I prefer indoor hydroponics because of all the control you have. Creating the perfect environment for the crops helps to create the best tasting produce! That being said, I still LOVE digging in the earth and getting my hands dirty!

It also depends on what you are growing and the set up. Growing hydroponic tomatoes vertically does not provide the best production but growing hydroponic tomatoes in buckets is a game changer! Also, growing tomatoes in soil is easy! All you do is add water and they grow.

**3. What types of crops/products do you grow besides baby greens?**

I started by growing lettuce and kale for a chef. There was only so much he could take so we talked about what produce he needed. It turns out there were rare products that he didn't have local access to so I started growing those, including shiso (Japanese mint- anise flavor), Chervil (French herb), red veined sorrel, and a variety of mustard greens.

Then I tried to grow plants I had never heard of before! I grew black carrots that turn pink when mixed with lemon, a leaf that tastes like oysters and one that tasted like cucumber. I even grew yellow and white Alpine strawberries that were featured in the Wall Street Journal.

At DC Ranch, I grow a variety of herbs like, lavender, sage, rosemary, thyme, 4 different kinds of basil, mint, cilantro, lots of tomatoes, bell peppers, strawberries, and 5-7 varieties of edible flowers-borage, firecrackers, dianthus, marigolds, calendula, and bachelor buttons.

**4. Where do you sell your products to?**

Since the business closed, DC Ranch has been my only produce customer. However, 2 years ago, I started selling honey, bee pollen and honeycomb from a local beekeeper, to chefs and friends. I love infusing honey!

**5. What is your hope for the future of the business?**

I hope people start to grow more, support farmers markets better, and eat at locally owned restaurants as much as possible.

